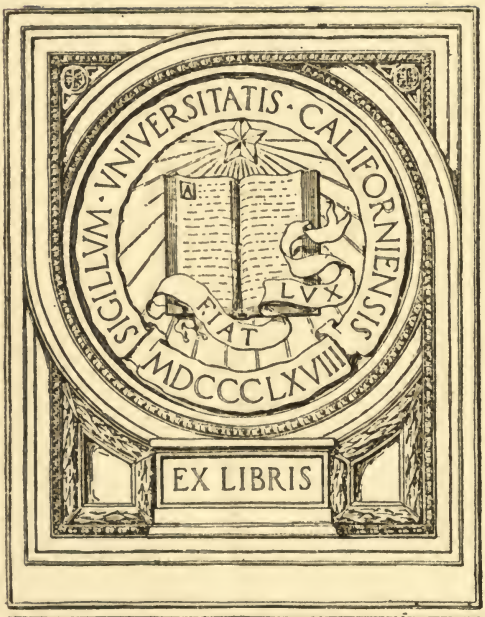
WAR AND LAUGHTER

JAMES OPPENHEIM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WAR AND LAUGHTER

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BY

JAMES OPPENHEIM

AUTHOR OF "SONGS FOR THE NEW AGE"

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WAR AND LAUGHTER

MUSICAL PIECES

1—Songs of the Morning
2—Songs of Noon
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MORNING

MORNING AND I

WHEN the corn is full of glory from the wind-play,
Morning, the blue-caped singer,
Crosses his legs on the hills, and with sun-eye winking,
Sings me this song:

Young laggard!
Why laugh as you loaf alone in the garden?
Why laugh?
It 's five o'clock, and no one 's up:
Saving, of course, the chicks,
Saving, of course, the calves . . .
No one 's up,
Why laugh as you loaf alone in the garden?

I pick a seckel pear from the grass,
Bite it, and wink back slowly at laughing Morning,
And looking careless,
Sing him this stave:

Old Lover:
I laugh because of a mighty secret that's
mine . . .
That's why . . .
Is it five o'clock? Then let it be . . .
Let the chicks go pecking the corn,
And the calves go cropping the grass . . .
Am I alone?
Oh, only alone with a mighty secret that's
mine . . .

Then Morning bursts out laughing: twenty birds are
startled to song . . .
And he and I in the silence
Wink once again to each other . . .
Had n't he been blowing kisses to Earth millions of
years before I was born?

ON MORNING HILLS

FLASH of all sunny loveliness,
Dance of the larkspur,
Dance of the larkspur . . .

(*Nod, little bells,*
Tease the vagrant honey-plunderers,
Lure the tiger-bellied bees . . .)

Wind laughs: I laugh:
Off, countryside, be off on a gale,
And the odors of the garden
Blow, spiced and cool, like honey on my lips . . .

Flash of blue heavens and the hawk lost
Lonely in the blue,
Flash of green hill-tops and the cattle
Fenced in the fields . . .
Flash of all sunny loveliness:
Wind laughs: I laugh:
For the cool laughter echoes
Of my love in the cool silent house.

LARKSPUR

BLUE morning and the beloved,
The hill-garden and I . . .

Blue morning and the beloved,
Leaning, laughing and plucking,
Plucking wet roses . . .

(She among the roses,
I among the larkspur,
Bob-white, warbler, meadowlark, bobolink,
Song, sun,
And still morning air.)

I snipped off a larkspur blossom of china-blue
And held it,
A blossom against the sky . . .

And heaven opened out
In one small flower-face . . .

And the beloved,
Plucking roses, plucking roses, old-fashioned roses,
Lifted her face
With eyes of china-blue.

(She among the roses,
I among the larkspur,
Bee-hum, brown-mole, downy chick, hummingbird:
Light, dew,
And laughter of my love.)

GOOD-MORNING

ARROW-SUN!
Morning, the bold young giant
Sticks you in his bent bow of shining blue
And shoots you toward the zenith . . .

(This way, Wind, forget-me-nots are little:
Stoop and uplift them . . .
Come up, Mole, from your subterranean plunder,
The juicy tulip roots . . .
Dew along the gossamer, twinkle in the garden-grass . . .
For one is coming hither,
One is coming hither,
The darling of the morn . . .)

She comes: in the doorway I see her . . .
She steps out,—Good-morning!
My rival, the gale, is ahead of me, kissing her lips . . .
Arrow-sun from the heaven darts

Confusing with gold her glance . . .
Bee thinks her lips are a rose-bud:
Brush him off, darling . . .
And come, come hither . . .
I know an angle in the fence
Where lovers may say good-morning.

THE RED MONTH

1

GOLDEN morning—
Hello! hello!
Echoes of song—the meadowlark twittering,
Spill of the swallow.

2

Dance on the slopes of bright dew, and come singing,
Beloved girl . . .
On the grass red with apples, come dancing, come
running . . .
Hark, how the thrush sings!
Mark, how the wind leaps!
Morning is here,
Bold morning is here.

3

Come across the grasses,
Come swift across the grasses,

Quicker!
quicker!
leap with your hands up:
Dance with knees up,
Gold hair flying,
White teeth bare . . .

4

For we shall go laughing straight through the orchard and scatter
Dew lit with sun,
And we shall go romping beneath green boughs low with apples
And over the stone-wall,
Scrambling through briers,
Race in the woods—the wind-loud woods—
The woods with the dead leaves flying . . .

5

Your cheeks, beloved, are fresher than pansies to the touch,
Dewy pansies . . .
Pluck handfuls of wild grapes,
And here 's a grape for you,
And here 's a grape for me—

Tart,
sharp,
to crush against the palate,
Staining red lips blue . . .

6

The thrush—is he up?
The mole—peers he forth?
Is the young dog running in the scent of the squirrel?
Who has washed the heavens blue
And set the sun there?
O make a cup of your hands and in the clearing
Catch cups of sunshine, loveliest, for me . . .

7

And come now in coolness where the thin stream tinkles,
And the brown wren dips her wings . . .
O my beautiful!
Come now and gathered be all in an armful,
Under leafy oak-boughs, here where the wasps sing,
O my beautiful!
Kiss my lips and let me know
That the ripe month—the red month—
September the glorious,

Has tapped the gold-wine of the sun
And sluiced it into our hearts . . .
And piped it into our hearts, darling . . .
So happy, happy are we.

8

And hark! the warbler!
He whistles! whistles!
This kiss, and *this* kiss!
Golden morning!
Hello! hello!

NOON

THE SNARE

OLD songs snared me back,
Echoes of a woman's voice heard in the misty luminous morning of my life,
The smell of warm new milk,
And of apples turning to cider on the ground,
And I was lured by the light that a hummingbird shook from his wings,
There among the honeysuckle, there among the yellow fragrance . . .
And the brooding and hot sunlight that slanted with dancing motes in my top-floor room,
And I was afraid of a big black dog,
And afraid of death,
And shrieked "Mother" . . .

She was the love-woman: my Mother . . .
The little child found her his nourishing Earth,
His stars of dream, his sun of passion . . .
She was religion: she was God . . .
Long and long she folded me in her soul,

And there I wandered,
In a snare of old songs.

And there became two of me after that:
An outer and inner self:
A world-self passing for a man,
But in me I bore the little child who would not grow up . . .
And when the blows of the world beat on me,
And I ate of the sour bread of disillusionment,
And swallowed the gall of frustration,
I sank deep, deep into my soul,
A little child again,
In a snare of old songs,
And the smell of new warm milk,
And the arms of my love-woman, my Mother, folded about me . . .

No woman's face could please me among women,
And I could not love as a man loves:
For I was seeking among women my Mother,
Who was a myth out of childhood, and a legend sundered from life.

And a sweet woman and a young waited me at the door,

And a struggle began in my soul:
Whether I should love her as a man,
Or love her as a child.

I kissed her lips . . .
(Ah, when did I dream that kisses could be so sweet,
so sweet?)
I gathered her in my arms,
And beheld swimming across her blue-eyed countenance
A light as of heavens opening . . .
A light I had never seen . . .
It was the love-light . . . it was the love-light . . .

And my soul arose to love,
When lo,
Old songs snared me back,
The smell of warm new milk,
And the arms of my love-woman, my Mother, folded
about me . . .
Passion died:
Yea, though my soul wept, passion died . . .

And I knew that the hour of the sacrifice had come,
The hour of the slaying of the child,

When my own soul must slay the sweet child within me,
And overcome my Mother,
Freeing the man.

I must put away from me the snare of old songs,
And the echoes of the luminous early days,
Hummingbird radiance and the scent of honeysuckle,
And slaughter my God on a crucifying Cross,
And unloose my love-woman's arms so tightly, divinely binding me in . . .

And I must meet the world face to face,
And grow tougher than its blows,
And mightier than its besieging hosts,
And give myself to new vague songs of reality . . .

And I must come from under the wings of this beautiful woman . . .
And when I run for comfort and help, I must run to my own self . . .
Free even from her that I love . . .

And I must go down to the darkness of the waters of
my Soul,
And make a secret struggle,
Of which I can tell no man . . .
Down there the sacrifice is made . . .
Down there the child is slain . . .

What breaks in my heart, breaks open?
What wild light? what plunging seas?
What hardy odor of the balsams on the peak?
What promise is this of a god in my soul?
Blow, wind, blow her hair back,
Smite with your elemental radiance her eyes, O sun,
Sea-salt, quicken her lips,
And O, great Earth,
Pour your wild electricity up through her blood . . .
Earth calls to Earth,
The sea-gulls are beginning to cry in the gross dark-
ness over the ocean . . .
Dawn's beginning:
And I come . . .
Her lover comes.

QUICK AS A HUMMINGBIRD

QUICK as a hummingbird is my love,
Dipping into the hearts of flowers—

She darts so eagerly, swiftly, sweetly,
Dipping into the flowers of my heart . . .

NO END OF THE SONG

ROSE of the hills, hearken:
There is no end to my song of you, for there is no end to my love . . .
Who shall count the beauties a sun's ray falls on?
And who shall count the possibilities of a babe who opens his eyes on a new planet?
And who shall count the songs that a loved woman sings with her body and spirit when her lover is listening?

BEHIND THE MIRROR

I LOOKED long into my love's eyes,
And I saw in each a fringe of the dark green hills on the horizon,
And a patch of heaven bluer than their blue,
And the tint of a field was there,
But in the center of each, darker than the dark pupil,
Sat I myself, gazing out tranquilly with her soul and her love.

LOVE-SONGS

MY tiny hands not being able to weave a garland
of the stars,
I made curious songs for my beloved,
To crown her with.

For it seemed to me that my beloved dwelt in Paradise,
Somewhere with Beatrice of the Italian song,
And that a ring of stars would be a poor enough halo
for her radiant head.

Ah, but thus I wronged my love for my beloved:
For I made her a spirit, and left the greatest songs
of all unsung:
The true love-songs that a man sings with his lips,
his eyes, his flesh:
Not to a heavenly spirit, but to a human woman . . .

So now I brush away Paradise and stars and curious
songs like hindering cobwebs,
And see that my beloved is a breathing and laughing
and passionate body,

And that the iris of her eyes is blue, and the pupils
dilated and wonderfully deep,
And that her lips are firm and moist and sweet,
And her hands grasp tinglingly,
And the skin of her neck and shoulders is cool and
fresh,
And that there is a fragrance about her that is love-
lier to me than meadows of sun-dried hay,
And that her laughter is irresistible,
And that she in my arms is as much of glory and
ecstasy as a man may hold.

Wherefore Paradise is unnecessary,
And the flame of stars works no more transforma-
tions than the flame of her lips meeting mine,
And the miracle of her actuality, her breathing flesh,
and her contact with me,
Is as great a miracle as space may produce,
And so far as I am concerned, a greater.

NIGHT

WHEN NIGHT IS STILL

1

SWEET wind
Plays in the elms,
A frog
Croaks:
Night is still.

2

Let us sit hidden, beloved, from all save the stars,
And in the summer evening
Alone—(the others are gone)
Open our hearts, clinging together,
Our words like song in silence . . .

3

A rustle down the garden!
Is it she of the diaphanous raiment,
The rain-girl, South-Wind,
Slipping bough to bough and with quick fingers
Turning every leaf about?

She 's stolen every perfume
Of the garden, the woods,
And now she blows your hair out, love,
With fragrance on my cheeks.

4

Thick walks of stars!
Yonder 's the Great Bear, and low hangs the Dipper,
Mars burns red; that is Orion:
I would I had the Pleiades to hang as a necklace
Here about your throat . . .

5

Cool hand in mine,
Cool arm about my neck . . .
I draw you close into my embrace and press
Cool lips to cool lips . . .
The world is lost . . .
Only a wild song sings in our ears, and a throbbing
Of radiance dazzles our eyes . . .
We are alone . . . the others are gone . . .

6

The gardener has been hoeing the Earth:
How it reeks!
The house is haunted by its own emptiness!
It creaks behind us . . .
There 's not a man or woman between here and the
farm-light faint on the hills . . .
Just Earth, the conferring of stars, South-Wind and
us . . .

7

This is the summer night,
And this is love . . .
O harmony past understanding . . .
We are as one song sung by two voices when the
night is still.

THE COMING OF EVENING

1

HAS there come
Silence of the snow?
Has there fallen
Silver of dusk from the low snow-blown clouds
To fold around the golden circles of the lamps?
Do I hear
Young girls laughing, boys calling?

O evening solemn,
Solemn Sunday's done:
And stillest Sabbath ends with chiming of bells,
Church-bells,
Bells benignly beating . . .

2

Red houses are gray in the dark,
And the windows
Grow oblongs of yellow . . .

In snow-mist the city is hidden:
Warm in the darkness
Families gather for supper in light that is
golden . . .
Olden
The charm is:
Glowing, the heart
Opens to evening . . .

3

My love . . .
My own, my darling . . .
Far and far
Are you . . .
I wait . . . I long . . .

4

And I remember now, as a music
Half-forgotten, comes surging back—
And I remember now, as a dream of childhood—
Remember now,
Logs in hearth and the gold flames tongueing,
And all the long day, all the long day hidden,
Hidden from the world,

We two there before the hearth-fire golden,
Hand in hand,
We two there before the hearth-fire golden,
Cheek to cheek . . .

And I know now that it was glorious Sunday:
I know now we drank the deep bliss of loving:
I know now how far, darling,
Are you . . .
How far . . . how far and far . . .

5

Church-bells chime,
Bells benignly beating . . .
Solemn Sunday's done.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

WE age inevitably:
The old joys fade and are gone:
And at last comes equanimity and the flame burning clear . . .

We see deeply into the human heart:
Its strange and terrible desires:
Youth's longing, age's wistfulness . . .

We seem so often to destroy our deepest happiness,
To work for ourselves cruel pangs, heartbreaking pains . . .
Misunderstanding, misunderstood, we move and are moved . . .

And he we despise is not so very unlike us,
And he we envy may envy us;
Tangled, groping, we toil, we build, we hope for great and enduring joy,
And often deceived, find bitterness . . .

They that love, part:
They that are parted, cannot discover each other:
Disease and poverty, crime and war, and a host of ills
Mar the advance . . .

Who presses us as through a sieve of pain, and why?
Why this Earth-experience? this unescapable agony?

Come, fill the glass, and you kiss mine, and I kiss yours,
And a sip of each other's wine . . .
And then our lips, close together . . .

O my beloved,
For you alone, if for nothing else,
My life is a miracle . . .
In the stormy tangle, the flame burns clear;
And it is blessing
To see so deep within the human heart.

LAUGHTER

LAUGHTER

I SAY Yes,
Yes to the dance of feet in the Spring,
Yes to the shouts of children,
Yes to Laughter!

Laughter, last of the gods,
And of them the greatest,
Yes, say I, and salute you!

Man 's the bad child of the Universe . . .
I know that . . .
Am I not a man?
Wicked is my wickedness: an impudent girl:
We dance on the housetops when the moon is aloft,
We dance in the street, in the public glare,
But who knows us? who sees us?
My visible feet are still, and my face is solemn.

As Sunday is the Sabbath, a day of holy unctions,
I said, I will go visit the solemn ones:

They whose mouths are turned down at the corners,
and whose glassy eyes never wink nor gleam:
I will visit, not the worshipers in a Church:
I will go visit the fishes . . .

Crowded was the aquarium:
On one side the glass, the people: on the other, the solemn ones . . .
I stood and marveled at the miracle of their gravity . . .

You see, they wave their fins, open their mouths,
And hang suspended in bubbling waters;
The circle of their flat eyes heaves a little without lids:
They are neither happy nor unhappy . . .
I knew they were fishes: but did they know they were fishes?
No, nor even that I, watching them, was a man!

O dear old Universe, you big clumsy giant who find a whole sky too small to sprawl over,
You star-bellied monster,
Who outstare me with a Galaxy of eyes,

I, so little, your least tremor would crush me and
my Earth,
I, your bad child,
Wink at you, and laugh . . .

Why so solemn?
Why such millenniums of laughterless struggle?
Did you care only to increase life,
To push up fiercely from Sun into Earth, from
Earth into animals,
From ape into man?
Your stars shine, your waters roar, your earthquakes
quake, and the noses of your cats sneeze,
How gravely!

Not that there is not sportiveness and joy . . .
Surely cubs play, and the love-season sounds with
the joy of the birds,
The young colts gallop in the meadow,
The rooster crows,
The whisper of new green leaves has gladness in
it . . .
But when was joy laughter?

Old Universe, you are one great flood, and the animals are all under your waters;
Only Man has poked his head up above the surface, and taken a look around,
And seen you, and your children, and his own absurd self,
And opening his mouth wide, has wickedly laughed . . .

For Joy is sacred: and Laughter is wicked:
Joy is inside Life: Laughter is outside:
The lark sings because he must,
Man laughs because he is free.

Why does the porpoise jump out of the water, and splash?
A part of his solemn business!
But the folks crowded around his circular tank, shook the roof with shouting laughter . . .

Consider us, Creation!
Though you took patient eras beyond counting to create us,
Somehow we are enough detached from you, and from your purpose,
To look back, and laugh . . .

Worse than that!
Consider how your bad children get around you . . .
We put our fingers to our noses and wiggle them at you,
We make mating sterile,
We drink alcohol,
We live in places of stone and steel,
We tear our Earth up,
We float where we were meant to sink:
You think to darken us with the night, so we light lamps:
You think to freeze us with the cold, so we start fires:
And our ha-ha shakes our theaters to the amazement of dumb heaven.
Are we not cynical, uproarious, obscene and impudent?
Do we not proclaim ourselves the top-notch of the world?

Behold, though you are terrible,
We laugh back, and treat you, at best, as a jolly comrade.

But it 's the wickedest child that is the darling . . .
We *are* your darlings, are we not?
Truly now fine impudent young gods have risen to companion you,
Yes, to transcend you, and by transcending, bring you to new fulfilments . . .

For sublimity has bungled . . .
It simply spewed out Life, haphazard,
Till by divine accidents, and out of the deadliest purposes,
We were born: to see: to know: to take hold:
To laugh away fear.

Laughter saves us:
Still more than half of us is buried in the quicksands,
Still we suffer,
Still we doubt and are damned . . .
But comes the moment when we take a square look at ourselves,
And seeing how absurd our antics are, laugh and are healed . . .

And so, perhaps, the laughing animal shall save creation . . .

Already the wizened stars must be worried, dumbfounded,
To catch that raucous cackle and chortle from the worthless Earth . . .
That mirth in the trenches of the dead,
That noise of relatives eating ham sandwiches after the funeral is over,
That chuckle of the rebuilders of cities following the earthquake,
That wheezing gay cough of the dying consumptive over the doctor's joke . . .

And now, Creation, I think your very purpose was in this:
That your great face struggled for ages on ages to break in a smile . . .
We are that smile . . .

So I say Yes,
Yes to the dance of feet in the Spring,
Yes to the shouts of children,
Yes to laughter!

Laughter, last of the gods,
And of them the greatest,
Yes, say I, and salute you!

THE GREATEST

THE greatest are the simplest . . .
They need be nothing else . . .

It is the rest who have to play parts,
To seem what they are not.

TO NIETZSCHE

AMAZING anchorite,
Sick god,
Why were you an arrow of longing for the Superman?

Not even *Man* is here:
Children in masks and savages with manners
Is all that we are—
We are striving to be—human . . .
And even—all-too-human . . .

You ask for a Superman?
First then produce—a Man.

REPORT ON THE PLANET, EARTH

TO the Sky-Council on Star, Riga, Milky Way:
I have to report:
That detailed by the Council I fell on a beam of light down through interstellar space
A year and a day,
Dropping through rings of worlds, and past white flakes of suns,
And found at last, in a cranny of the crowded universe,
The Solar System,
And investigated one of its small planets, the Earth.

These are my findings:
The inhabitants thereof are not very game:
They complain and whine a great deal:
They cannot stand pain:
They object to work:
They think of nothing but themselves:
No concern for these crowded heavens around them:
Nor Earth's purpose in the skies:

Quarrelsome, they slaughter each other with ingenious death-dealers:
They bind themselves with strange chains to one another:
They fear the new: they fear the old: they fear birth: they shrink from death:
Those that have visions among them are persecuted:
They applaud any one who makes them forget what they are and whither they are going:
They are cruel, stupid, childish, undeveloped.

I have to report:
That they even forget that they are merely movable parts of the Earth,
And that everything that inheres in Earth inheres in them:
That the little ball that blusters so, spouting its seas in tempest, and sliding its hills,
Smothered in storm and lightning, and plagued with an uncertainty of flood and thirst,
Hot, cold, distempered, risky,
Is repeated in each one of them: they too full of weather and disaster:
Primitive, perilous . . .

The which forgetting,
Produces a certain surface of calm and harmony:
Yes, for a while:
Then the explosion: then crime, breakage, battle . . .

I have to report:
That projected by Earth, as Earth by the skies, for large purposes and splendid adventure,
They sidestep, try to evade, escape their destinies:
Do their utmost to reduce life to a mechanism that works by itself:
Leaving them free—for what? Communion with Earth?
Vision of heaven? Probing of self?
Why no: free for stupefying stimulants and memory-sponging joys . . .

I have to report:
That they are very cunning indeed:
They have builded larger than themselves:
Giant cities have sprung from their pigmy hands:
Their engines are excellent:
But to what use do they put their tools?
Tut! peacock-feathers, and the well-stuffed gullet!

I have to report:
That though the Earth is rich, yet most of them are very poor:
In bitter want:
Curious, this childish snatching of things from each other!
Greed is their stupidest sin!

I have to report:
That while there is much excellence in the love between man and woman,
And the tender love toward children,
They so clutch and claw one another that love stales into indifference or irritation:
Greed! greed again!

I have to report:
Hypocrisy rampant, and hardly any one passing for what he really is:
But advertising himself as something quite other:
Yes, anything to succeed!

I have to report:
Slights, rebuffs, insolences unnumbered,
Nothing run right: but everywhere insidious theft and pilfering:

And every one sentimental: glossing it all over with
a call to love for mother, for children, for one's
country.

I have to report:
And, Powers, this is what puzzles me:
An Earth so absorbingly interesting, so electric in
spite of its dullness, so joyous in spite of its
pain,
That, were I not compelled to make my cosmic ex-
aminations,
I should love to live there, say, three-score ten years
of their life!

IMMORAL

I KEEP walking around myself, mouth open with amazement:
For by all the ethical rules of life, I ought to be solemn and sad,
But, look you, I am bursting with joy.

I scold myself:
I say: Boy, your work has gone to pot:
You have scarcely enough money to last out the week:
And think of your responsibilities!
Whereupon, my heart bubbles over,
I puff on my pipe, and think how solemnly the world goes by my window,
And how childish people are, wrinkling their foreheads over groceries and rent.

For here jets life fresh and stinging in the vivid air:
The winds laugh to the jovial Earth:
The day is keen with Autumn's fine flavor of having done the year's work:

Earth, in her festival, calls her children to the crimson revels.
The trees are a drunken riot: the sunshine is dazzling . . .

Yes, I ought, I suppose, to be saddened and tragic:
But joy drops from me like ripe apples.

CREED

AFTER all,
With clean laughter and a hard soul,
I greet the morning.

My darkness was full of disturbance:
The philosophers and the scientists and the doctors
were wrangling together:
And each grew angry with greed for my soul,
And angrier to find the others also greedy for me.

My friend, the Mechanist, eyed me:
"You are dull," said he, "if you reject my belief . . .
Life, sir, is a rearrangement of atoms:
You are a machine:
The Universe is purposeless:
It contains no more to-day than it did a millennium
of eons ago.
My chemico-physical friend: this is the fiat of
Science."

"Thanks," said I . . .
"This relief is great.
Good-by, Old Ethics, and my Immortal Soul:
This machine is quit of you."

"Hold," cried a voice,
And my friend, the Finalist, buttoned me . . .
"Who rearranged the atoms?
Who wrought the eye that beholds the shows of this
Earth?
Who wrought Man, the highest?
There is a plan working out:
We move toward 'one far-off divine event' . . .
Believe this, or die damned."

"Excellent," said I . . .
"I am glad to know I am planned and moved . . .
Farewell, Originality, farewell, Responsibility—
Use me, O Rearranger of Atoms!"

"Both wrong," came a sore whisper:
And behold, there stood friend What-do-you-call-
him? . . . .
At any rate he thus delivered himself . . .

"Ahem, of course, as it were, the world's a ma-
chine,
But then, too, purposes invade it . . .
It's on the make . . .
What make? who knows?
It may go here, it may go there . . .
A vital impetus impels it,
A sheaf of tendencies expands through it . . .
There is no goal . . .
Eternal Creativeness, Variability, Newness:
The past bound up in the present makes the future,
And Man's the crest of the wave."

"Greatly obliged," said I,
"Come on, Old Vital Impetus:
Come, Herd of Tendencies:
Let's start a fresh creation to-morrow morning."

"Eh, what is this?"
Alas, I was confronted by an antique Dualist:
"Do you not know you stand in the clutch of Error?
Rash man, the World's not One, and neither is it
Many:
The World is Two:
There's body and there's spirit,

And superimposed on the natural order is the moral
order . . .
There is a moral world: an ethical framework:
And to its laws your soul must bow . . .
Be ethical, or be damned."

"Good God!" I sighed,
"How simple . . .
I 'll study the code and know just what to do . . .
An end of worry!"

A dozen voices spoke at once:
"You say good God . . . remember the children of
Abraham . . ."
"Nay," said another, "Christ was the Lord Incar-
nate . . ."
"Christ? Buddha!"
"Buddha? Mahomet, the only true prophet of
Allah!"
"Tut! it 's all a neurosis: a mere subconscious im-
pulsion!"
"Oh, no, it 's economic determinism!"
"Matter? There is no matter . . . the world of
sense is illusion . . .
Thought is reality."

The night grew dark and full of disturbance . . .
And I knew then that the philosophers, the scientists,
the doctors and the divines
Were all greedy after my soul . . .

It was well that morning broke,
Well that revolt swept through me, lifting me up,
Well, that after all,
With clean laughter and a hard soul,
I could greet the morning.

"Friends all," said I,
"Perhaps Life is what you each say it is . . .
But I suspect that Life is both less and more . . .
I suspect that the human mind is a very limited
organ . . .
I suspect that it loves simplicity, that it loves to re-
duce multiplicity to unity,
That it craves graspable formulas and prescriptions:
And I suspect that the formula of each man is the
man himself:
The sort of breakfast he cares for, and the kind of
pride he indulges in,
And his happiness or misery in his love-life,
And the kind of impression he wants to make . . .

A healthy belly rejoices that it is chemico-physical,
And a hardy ego enjoys being a god,
And a methodical card-index soul is glad of a planned-out universe,
And a wild gipsy believes in chaos,
Whereas a child longs for God, the Father.

"Now, friends all . . .
I reject none of your formulas: no, not a one . . .
They are excellent tools to do excellent work . . .
And then, too, they keep you in pride and healthy defiance:
But as to accepting them: that is another matter . . .
Rather will I discover what I am,
And accept those tools which will help to unfold me further in selfhood,
And such things as I need for my own pride and my own tasks.
And I will accept them very gingerly,
Not as Truth, my friends, but as Tools alone . . .
And one only thing shall be a dogma with me:
Namely, that little is known: and that I know very little . . .

"So I will write me songs that please my own soul,
And walk in the garden and smell the roses and forget-me-nots,
And drink a cocktail, if I have a mind to,
And give myself to the mystery of this enveloping world,
Send out my feelers through the dark to the untouchable stars,
And the almost equally untouchable men and women around me . . .
Sensitively respond to the weather, and the splendors of art, and the life of cities,
And find me a woman who meets me with glad responses,
And love mightily . . .

"And I shall be as little afraid of laughter as of tears . . .
Read philosophy and science with zest, and test them out against the smell of honeysuckle . . .
Ponder on the universe, and then kiss the lips of my adored one . . .
And I shall be unafraid of the mightiest purposes . . .

If I see for my soul an unfolding, I shall strive to unfold it so,
And if I find friends who can share the good of life with me, I shall bind them to my heart . . .

"For, dear Doctrinaires,
I too am greedy after my own soul:
And I believe Life is greater than any of our statements about it,
And I believe in Experience, as a realization beyond the power of thought,
And there is something in me that can arise and laugh freshly after defeat,
Yea, even after absorbing intricate logic of philosophical web-spinners . . .

"A man before these mysteries,
A man against vastness and multiple Life,
With awe, reverence, impudence, gaiety, anger, delight,
I give myself to the glories of this day,
I move on by the North Star of Self.

"And even if this be creed also,
I say, let it be so . . .
It is at least my own!

"So, after all,
With clean laughter and a hard soul,
I greet the morning."

A FUNERAL

I HEARD the preacher preaching at the funeral:
He moved the relatives to tears telling them of
the father, husband and friend that was dead:
Of the sweet memories left behind him:
Of a life that was good and kind.

I happened to know the man:
And I wondered whether the relatives would have
wept if the preacher had told the truth:
Let us say like this:

"The only good thing this man ever did in his life,
Was day before yesterday:
He died . . .
But he did n't even do that of his own volition . . .
He was the meanest man in business on Manhattan
Island,
The most treacherous friend, the cruelest and stin-
giest husband,
And a father so hard that his children left home as
soon as they were old enough . . .

Of course he had divinity: everything human has:
But he kept it so carefully hidden away that he
might just as well not have had it . . .

"Wife! good cheer! now you can go your own way
and live your own life!
Children, give praise! you have his money: the only
good thing he ever gave you . . .
Friends! you have one less traitor to deal with . . .
This is indeed a day of rejoicing and exultation!
Thank God this man is dead!"

SAID THE SUN

SAID the sun: I that am immense and shaggy flame,
Sustain the small ones yonder:
But what do they do when their half of the Earth is turned from me?
Poor dark ones, denied my light.

A little brain, however, was on that other half of the planet . . .
And so there were lamps.

THE UNINSPIRED LABORER

SO, you love the "uninspired laborer"—
He is "near to Earth":
You feel mystically for him, and fight his cause.

Fight his cause if you will:
Live with him if you desire:
But do not place him above the first of men;
Do not put him above the level of the noble and great . . .
Nay, nor above yourself . . .

For if your religion is the uninspired laborer,
Because he is near to Earth,
Why not go nearer to Earth,
Back through the process a bit further,
And love and make a religion of the animals?

What is happening is that you have much of the beast in yourself,
And you therefore make peace with yourself
By calling the beast a god.

EAST AND WEST

A MODERN SPEAKS:

WHEN shall the parted be joined
And the far grow near?
The voice of the Sphinx in starlight in silence of the desert,
The voice of the East:

THE SPHINX SPEAKS:

When Earth became Man, I became Mother of Man . . .
My inscrutable mystery enfolded him in a second journey in the womb,
And the Earth-born became Man-born: flesh became spirit.

My sons are Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster and Jesus:
Conversion-names . . .
Images that lifted the eyes of man up,
That turned the passion of Man from procreation to self-creation.

The rivers that flowed to the phallus now branched
to the brain:
Man overflowed his animal: god was born.

This is the Treasure I found:
And this I guard . . .
The engulfing centuries engulf me not:
Asia and Egypt sit with eyes inward, and lips pray-
ing:
They crouch like a Sphinx: they brood like a
Buddha:
They save and guard this sacred Fire against Time:
They save it, waiting the coming of the Hero . . .

Then shall be the Marriage of the Earth:
Then million-scattered humanity becomes Man . . .

In ancient days,
The Hero departed, my religions on his lips,
But his own blood too full of young quivering fire
to bide with me,
Oh, adventurer, Earth-lover, warrior-man . . .

He saw not the stars as Creation:
He beheld the North Star as a guide for his
ship . . .

He sought no Holy Land:
He searched for Eldorado . . .
The lightning held no vision for him . . .
He seized it to turn wheels . . .

He converted mystery into action . . .
Not the tall spirit he sought, but a longer reach of his body:
Derrick-arms, wheel-feet, steel-muscles, engine-heart,
And electric voice and ear and telescope-eyes.

I sit a Giant of Soul:
And the Hero has become a Giant of Flesh . . .
When shall the Giants mate?
When shall my Soul enter his Body,
And his Body enfold my Soul?
When shall Earth and the Life of Earth be one?

THE HERO SPEAKS:

Mother, and Woman of Mystery,
Eternal Feminine,
I stand on the ultimate Western shores, and behold,
I see the East before me . . .

And so I pause . . .
My helmet of steel I push back from my eyes,
I blow from me great mill-smokes that dim my vision,
The hurry of my engine-winged feet is slowed and stopped,
And my blackened hands in the foundry fires rest from their cunning.

My quest has led to strange ends:
Truly I went forth eager to throw the hills,
And break in the bare-back seas,
Yea, to harness and bridle the fire-nostriled Earth . . .

When I stood naked, flesh without claws or fangs,
A voice the wind drowned,
An eye stopped by opaqueness,
A strength unequal to the horse,
I said I will become a colossus of tools . . .

I will order the fecundity of the Earth that I hunger not,
Clothe myself that I freeze not;

Ride water, fly land, dart speech, light darkness;
Commandeer the secrets of the Stars and the Earth-sealed Past . . .
And stride the world, its Conqueror . . .

Much have I wrought, a miracle-worker . . .
And yet there is confusion and darkness in me . . .
Festering slums, slaughter, and restlessness . . .
Behold, I have created the Machine, and it has become my Master:
As a slave I drudge and suffer to keep the wheels turning . . .
Have I gained the whole world, and lost my own soul?
Have I bound myself over to my giant body?

For my own mind, Science, begins to deny me . . .
Even that which discovered and seized the powers of the Earth,
Looking further, probes Life,
And begins to whisper of the Soul . . .

And now, O Sphinx, on my western outpost shores I question you again . . .
What is the answer?

THE SPHINX SPEAKS:

You have failed to conquer the Conqueror . . .
You have failed to conquer Yourself . . .

Turn to where there is Love, turn to your Soul, to me . . .
Come, O Hero, back to the Mother of the East: . . .
Come, my Lover . . .

A MODERN SPEAKS:

I heard East call to West, and West to East . . .
I see a vision of the bridal emerging . . .
I see a vision of planetary man . . .

Man shall have One Body, One Soul . . .
The East brings Soul, the West Body . . .

Behold, then a mighty inner strength in a network of Earth-engirdling outer strength . . .
A being that is the Planet, with telegraph nerves,
With winged mobility, and profound knowledge,
With interchange of life and tools,
With conqueror's strength over the brutality of Earth,

With leisure, wealth, and beauty,
All harmonized with the flowing life of the heavens,
The flood that rolls in the inner reaches,
The unity of the creative urge, the spirit of man,
And the body that makes of vision, deed,
Of dream, action . . .
Thus shall the god beyond man be born.

THE WISE

GLORY 'S not otherwhere but here:
Yonder stars may be more horrible than the worst of Earth.

The foolish man seeks happiness in the distance:
The wise grows it under his feet.

CITY OF MYSELF

MANY travelers, welcome home!
I am the city for little travelers: the hospitable city:
Come, happy crowds of atoms, and be housed and at home with me.

Come from the fields, the seas and the hills,
Drop from the air,
Oh, atoms that make my body, that gather so cunningly,
That out of your rhythmic and ordered millions make this metropolis, myself!

I shall never understand you:
Never know by what wisdom you choose your tasks:
Why some of you become gray brain, and some red blood,
And others this flexible cartilage, and others secretions . . .
Never may my imagination behold you in your numberlessness,

Nor guess at your divisions of labor, and your marvelous brotherhoods . . .
How do you choose this government, my will?
Who appoints the communication system, my nerves?
Who places the earnest workers in every part?
Whose wisdom has arranged the transportation scheme for food and waste?
Who inaugurated this clever street cleaning department?
Yea, and this central dynamo-plant, my heart?

Sometimes pestilence sweeps this city,
And there are strange fires that play over it:
It has its holidays of rejoicing, its twilights of melancholy,
There are days of terrific toil, there are nights of sleepiest peace . . .

But forever there is more brotherhood and union among its millions,
More harmony of universal work,
Than in London town, or Paris, or that lusty tall giant, New York . . .

And lo, here is my city, right here composing me at this moment,
Compact, small and usable;
My feet under the table, my right hand holding a pen,
My eyes peering down on these emerging words . . .

Is n't it all unbelievable?
So natural in its effects, so impossible in its causes?
So lately come into existence, so soon to vanish as all cities have vanished?

EARTH-BOUND

MAN, full of the passion of his little Earth,
Finds it hard to detach himself and become a part of the stars—
To view aside from his desires and dreams the burning and flaming of the universe—
To see the immensity of the drive of life, and how minor is his fate in this major action.

He looks into the night and says: Behold, there is Peace, there is Silence!
Not so! There is flame, creation, wingéd speed, and the roaring of new-made worlds!
Peace? Where is it? Only in our own victories over ourselves,
Only in moments of rest after battles.

Death will surprise him who longs for his infancy again—
The silence and hush of the womb.

THE WEAK SHALL FAIL

THE weak shall fail:
Leave them to their own devices and they fail:
Prop them up, and they will crawl with crutches:
Or give them light, and they will not have the courage to see themselves in the light,
And to dare according to the light.

Strength breaks conditions, yea, and makes them:
Strength uses props to escape from props:
Strength, given the light, sallies out to the undared day . . .

Yea, it is hard doctrine:
And though the strong may understand and love the weak,
As a father his children,
And though he shall harness them to work and give them happy hours,
Little else can he do:
In the end, as in the beginning,
The weak shall fail.

SYMBOLS

ALL that we see is a symbol of the inner life—
Images by which we may think of the spiritual . . .
What precipices of Earth steeper and deeper than those of my own soul?
What clouds of the sky more darkening than those of my heart?
What sun so dazzling as the light of my spirit?

There were two of us, woman and man, going about the city . . .
Solid streets, our two solid bodies, sunshine and busy crowds . . .
But in reality, together we walked through swamps,
Went diving down dizzy abysses,
Climbed Himalayas for a vision of love,
Hunted in thick jungles, dragged in abandoned floods,
And fought like eagles in mid-heaven . . .

THE PLANETARY ANIMALS

THESE little planetary animals, men,
Dressed in fluent and elastic garments, strangely upright and movable,
Busily working, shaping, constructing on the broad surfaces of the Earth—
By mighty slopes, on great waters, in deep gulches—
Working their own will as against the will of Nature.

Patient, passionate, absorbed—
Hardly aware of background—
Working for appetite's sake, survival's sake—
Yet actors in an invisible drama.

OLD SORROW

I MET old Sorrow on a New England hill . . .
The West wind dancing down the slope, quite naked,
Skipping, slapping the cheeks of grapes,
And knocking apples about,
And pulling up handfuls of seeds out of gardens and scattering them wide,
Shocked old Sorrow . . .

"Young man," she said to me,
"If you think the heart is less wistful after visions
Than when Egypt builded
Or Greece made song,
If you think human destiny less tragic than on Gethsemane,
Or death easier than Rachel found it,
Look in your own heart, or your neighbor's . . .
Gray! gray! gray!
Even as the Atlantic on the cliffs of my roaring coasts . . ."

Just then the naked West wind
Yanked my hair back and kissed me with cider-fragrance on the lips
And sprinkling me with hayseeds
Went laughing down the lane . . .

"Sorrow," I said,
"I deny nothing . . .
Suicide, murder and child-beating are still in fashion,
Poverty finds the milk-bottle empty and the rich contemptuous,
Injustice, jealousy, lust . . .
All, all, freely granted . . .
Yet something new,
Something I can't define,
Something that dances,
Something that shines . . .
In the core, something that laughs, blowing us into to-morrow."

Nevertheless old Sorrow sat there on her New England hill:
While the strong youths of the region hurried away to the West.

"MAN, BORN OF WOMAN"

THEY sang of old of a Heaven as big as the sky,
And a Hell vast as chaos:
And they said the far-rolling multitudes of the dead
were swept to these empires:
There, radiant in the gaze of the Lord,
Or, charred in the Devil's blazings,
Millions on millions of Earth's flesh-children were
crowned or consumed . . .

But now I go examine my breathing body:
And in my mind's hand hold Hamlet-like my
skull . . .
Lo, in my hand the real Heaven, the real Hell . . .
In this spheroid shape, the profound consciousness:
Huge as nether night is Purgatory's domain,
And fanning further than the sun is the morning of
Paradise.

Ferried were the dead through mother to child and
from age to age
By Charon, the seed of man:

Ferried were the bodies of the dead:
In the flesh of my mother I changed from the floating cell, bequeathed by the dead,
Swiftly into the reptile, the ape, and so into man . . .
This little skull was distilled from a vanished sea of flesh . . .

And so with the bodies the selves of the dead were ferried:
Into this skull have the far-culled multitudes of the dead been caught:
Serpents coiled and fanging their prey:
The he-wolf stalking his mate when the spring moon silvered the jungle:
The gorilla crushing blood to his hairy breast:
Savages dancing rites round the fires of primeval fastnesses:
The arena-ringing Greeks, the sea-called Vikings,
Scalds of the North and prophets of the sand . . .
And the humble untableted millions in the fading chasms of time . . .

Down in Purgatory, the dead are sealed:
But they are I:

Of a sudden in the night the torment of Œdipus
astonishes my heart,
Or possessed by Othello a hissing jealousy stuns me:
Lo, at times I sweat with the guilt of Judas,
I laugh with torturer Nero's mirth:
And at times I am stark savage, demonic in the night
of the world,
And at times the lusting beast, hunting a mate . . .

But upward opens the golden dawn of Paradise in
the morning:
And there are the radiant dead: they are I:
Lord, my heart sings when Joan wakes in my soul:
My heart lifts its gates, and they are uplifted when
David walks on the slopes of my spirit:
My being rolls psalms of great praise when dream-
ing Buddha opens his eyes,
And the drums of new conquests greet the arising of
Charlemagne,
And spring is here where Jesus treads.

Lo, what am I then?
This poor little trafficker on the streets of noisy
trade?

This tiny eater and drinker that goes garbed to the table?
This atom of tinkling pain and mirth mocked by the stars? . . .
No, I am Heaven and Hell, housing humanity:
I am the race: I am the Earth: I am that I am . . .

God am I of the creation weltering within me . . .
God to seize on these snatches of song, these broken chords, these shattered tunes,
And shape a clear sharp music of Self.

Then let me build on what I am:
Let me build, not on the dream of myself in the hearts of my friends,
Not on the strange sweet saint that I think I should be,
But on this that I am . . .
Let me build in the foundations of my flesh,
A strong beast, a lithe savage, a human man . . .

Let me rear no palace of foam built on a tranced illusion:
But begin with the solid Earth, shaping my animal;
He shall be the least of me: but he shall be himself:

In clean joy drinking and eating of the life of the Earth,
And mating lustily . . .
And for the savage in me I shall grant a range and a scope:
I shall let him go fight in the raw battles of commerce,
And join in the sports of men:
I shall let his obscene laughter have its earthquake hour,
And grant him to be a loafer shuffling slow-footed in the mob.

Then greatly shall I seize on the powers of Hell and Heaven
To do my god's job, the shaping of a man . . .
The mind, the luminous bath of thought:
The friend, the lover woven into all flesh:
The toiler, shaping strange tools:
And that true creation of self that is wrought in the service of others,
And by the passion for creating souls . . .
If I am the race, I must work for the race:
If I am the Earth, I must shape to the purpose of the Earth:

I must open my being to the flow of the life of the
planet and the suns,
And give forth myself with the heat and love of
those fires . . .

Not beyond the stars,
Not beneath the Earth,
But here in this tiny skull are Heaven and Hell . . .
Such is Man, born of woman.

TWO MUSICS

THERE are two musics:
A backward music and a forward music . . .

The one is of childhood:
It has the rhythm of finger-sucking: steady and sweet.

The other is of manhood:
It is more like the rhythm of advancing Nature,
A vague harmony blending diverse pulsings;
Full of daring, a little unsatisfying,
Prompting to action, not to dreams.

A GIRL IN THE SUBWAY

HER colors called the eye:
A green silk skirt, and a black coat, with a red
rose dangling from it:
A black hat tied under the chin with velvet ribbon:
A drugged face, childishly pouting, with long-
fringed meaningless blue eyes.

Suddenly she opened a letter, and read it through,
And returned it to the envelope.
Then she gazed dreamily with tear-filled eyes.

THE OUTDOOR MOTION PICTURE SHOW

RED and green lamps were strung along the four
walls of the stockade,
Back, on the rocky hill, and the up-sloping street,
and in the tenement windows,
Crowds were watching the pictures slapped against
the side of night.

It was uncanny to see this pictured intimacy,
Men and women kissing and hugging in the open air,
Among crowds of stolid, speechless people;
Yea, to see writ in the heavens, as it were,
The inner life of this quiet audience of Earth:
To see what goes on under these masks
Flashed forth in action,
All in the warm and wet-edged night.

WOODS

WALKING in woods
Gray in my memories,
I heard the sighing of women,
But no one was there.

The afternoon was so still that I could hear the prickle of pine-needles fluttering on dead leaves . . .

I looked closer, and I too sighed . . .
The trees themselves were women, with silent arms held over my head . . .

I was very tired,
And I longed again to be a child,
Quit of the stern struggle of manhood . . .
So I went deeper into the gray woods . . .

Then horror rose in me:
And I could not move, nor close my eyes to the vision . . .

For about a tree coiled a serpent,
And bound to the tree by the serpent,
Struggled a child . . .

The child was dying . . .
He sank against the warm tree-trunk,
And the murmuring tree reached down to enfold
him . . .

I saw then a cleft in the tree,
And the child trying to enter into that fastness . . .

O then I knew he would die, smothered, in the tree-
trunk,
Or die in the coil of the serpent,
And as in a dream one at last shrieks, bursting
through bands of silence,
I shrieked: "His neck: strangle him!"

The child turned, seized the slippery neck, and
twisted it . . .
I drank my own blood in that battle,
Though still I was moveless . . .

Then I bore the child out of the woods in my arms,
But as we came to the meadows,
He melted, as it were, in my body . . .
And I laughed, a man again . . .

The gray woods of our memories are perilous
When we retreat from battle.

THE CENTAUR

IN a pleasant valley of childhood,
Where the brook splashed rock to rock,
Hidden by oaks and beeches,
I came across a strange animal
With a boy's face . . .

It was really a Centaur:
All that was horse was shaggy, fleshy and hot,
With rearing legs;
But the neck was the slim fresh torso of a boy,
White and curved,
And the dark head had beauty . . .

I stood, gazing, away from the sunlight that pierced
the treetops
With lances of light, breaking silver in the singing
waters . . .
And as I watched
I saw the boy turn against the horse,
And push with his hands the shaggy back,
And tear it with his teeth,

Groaning, gnashing,
While the legs leaped about and the tail swung
lashing back and forth . . .

I groaned myself, fearing the boy's death . . .
He struggled, sank, arose, and with a great cry,
As if from a rock, sprang forth suddenly,
Splitting the Centaur . . .

Then I marveled:
For the body of the horse stood there, a weeping
woman, solemn and shawled,
And the boy, turning away from her arms,
Was a man walking in sorrow.

It was thus the Mother lost her son.

THE GRAY MOTHERS

IN an ancient sunless temple,
Where even at midday the stars are seen through the roof,
The gray mothers stand, they whose eyes see too deep:
For out of them all flesh comes, and all the future.

Together, though they are millions, they breathe up one ghost,
She whose blood-drops are suns and planets,
The Mother of the Heavens.

Now ever a mother comes to the temple door
And sends, with kisses, and tears too, a little boy or a girl into the meadow . . .

So to the meadow ran
A white-bodied girl, sweet with loosed golden hair,
Ungarmented, singing . . .

Where the new buttercups fluttered on the wild
grass slope
She flung herself down,
And played with stones of every color,
And snatched at butterflies . . .

The Spring sun warmed her, the wind cooled her,
Her muscles played under the whiteness, and her
teeth gleamed as she laughed . . .
Yet even in her laughter was longing . . .

All at once her hand playing in the grass
Touched sharp a cold slippery snake
Basking in the sun . . .
Even as she shrieked, the serpent coiled, struck and
stung her.

She walked back slowly to the temple,
And now she stands with the gray mothers,
Part of the ghost whose breath of flame is the
stars . . .
Part of the vanished that yet is here.

STEPS OF THE SKY

ONCE by a strange power I walked up the steps
of the sky . . .
Each step was as tall as from Earth to the sun,
A cliff of ether.

I climbed a thousand steps, scaled up a thousand
skies,
Until the wheel of the Milky Way
Was only a ring on the finger of the Old Woman . . .

For at that great height
I saw I was in the hollow of a hand,
And in shadow through the outskirts of vastness I
saw dimly the body,
Hugely naked, sprawling in space . . .

She lay, many-breasted,
And at each breast a Universe drank of her milk.

THE ENCIRCLING

I LEFT the street and the sun,
And down through the little door I went into myself.

Now I had the ages to choose from . . .
And all worlds waited . . .

I saw shelves of red rocks,
Raw bones of the Earth sorrowful before dawn,
Risen from shadows . . .
And on the rocks struggled in each other's powerful arms
A naked man and a naked woman:
As if two rocks assailed each other.

Dawn began gray:
Each cliff was like a face sleeping in a flat shawl,
Or as a drowned face in a moving water.

Then as dawn lightened,
I saw that the cliffs were an arm, and the rocks were breasts,

And far off a mountain was the face of an ancient
and wise woman . . .
Against the breasts the man and woman laid them
down, and drank like babes . . .

And now I saw that the heavens were a large, dusky
and silent woman,
Who stooped with swarthy arms, holding the Earth,
Earth holding her children in the dawn . . .

I climbed slowly over the ledges,
Until in the woman's arms, I saw a smaller woman,
And in the smaller woman's arms, one yet smaller,
And yet another, and another, the smaller embraced
by the larger,
Till eyesight failed . . .

I grew weary, laid me down:
Arms enfolded me . . .
I was the tiniest of them all,
Circled in arms that were circled in arms back to
the circling arms of the mother heaven.

I drank of sun, of planet, and ether . . .
Until I too rose and wrestled on the rocks with a
strong naked woman.

After which,
Suddenly I saw the streets, the sun,
And I beheld myself in buttoned clothes, and in felt hat, and laced-up shoes . . .
Crowds were about me . . .
But I knew that they and I were merely as little doors
That opened backward into the Mother.

THE ADVENTURER

VAST is the Creation . . .
The Milky Way but a ring of fire . . .
Then where does Earth twinkle within it?

With its night and its day,
The damp weathery ball smeared thin with life,
Dropped many skies of space in the deeps,
Rolls through the elemental powers . . .

As grass, a creature lifts from it—
That brave gentleman,
That excellent adventurer,
That hardy devil— Man . . .

He sees the scoffing grandeur of the stars so great
that he is nothing looking up,
Yet he sings, praising Life,
He chants, praising dreadful and engulfing Night,
As if in his tininess he yet were the god of the world
that crushes him . . .

Ha, behold, in the float and bulk of the Universe,
The immense materiality of the skies,
Star-knotted ether,
Yea, this Creation,
Behold, the tiny creature it has produced . . .
The two-legged dancing flicker on its rolling planet,
Somewhere down there, or up there, lost in the rushing of the suns . . .

Yet Creation holds this creature forth,
Even as its highest:
Its loveliest, strangest, vastest,
Its whimsical, beautiful child . . .

His naked body against the hills or dipped in ocean,
This is the heavens with all their glories in brief epitome . . .

Vastness shrinks ever smaller to grow great . . .
Chaos rolls into suns, suns drop fragments that are planets,
And the mammoth shrinks into man . . .
This little eye, this infinitesimal nerve,
This sensitive tip of the world,
This skull, with its cupful of brain,

Into this narrow house creeps the whole of Creation,
And thus becomes human . . .

Glory then to man,
The brave fist that shakes at heaven,
The lips that laugh at death,
The heart that praises Creation!

RHYMES

SONNETS

I

NIGHT on the 'bus-top, and a thin mist played
Down the deep city: rolling cumbrously
We passed through double rows of lamps which made
The avenue a wingèd victory:
And gazing there, I wondered where I was:
Why stone-hemmed, mist-closed, man-surrounded, I
Went wheeling on a planet that, alas!
Wandered engulfed in some infinity.

But as this strangeness of my flesh came to me,
And death was real, and life a dream, I gazed
Into my soul, and saw your image: through me
A glory swam, to star-heights I was raised:
Have I not seen you brooding when you furled
Under your wings the vastness of the world?

II

EVERYWHERE, everywhere they whisper it,
On car, in shop, and where the corners meet,
Or on the sea, or in the quarry's pit,
And speaking, eyes grow wistful and lips sweet,
As suddenly they glimpsed a Paradise:
And "he" and "she" you hear, and "thus he said,"
And this one softly laughs and that one sighs,
And on old stories are their starved hearts fed.

When were we robbed of glory in time's dawn,
The glory that descended to the birds?
So that since then we seek a light withdrawn
And feed, not on the flame, but on sweet words?
For all the unhappy world, in lieu thereof,
Whispers the dream, whispers the dream of love.

III

HARK, how my heart sang in the morning watches
As from dark sleep I opened into light
And found the world wild with the wind-blown snatches
Of music and sunshine, and the flight, the flight
Of life down the shadowy streets: and my heart bounded
Laughing to be alive, and marveling why
Young June, as by a rind of glory rounded,
Struck with a radiance all reality.

Then as I came up from the bath of slumber,
Sun-fresh, and all my brain and heart awoke,
Laughing, my soul began a golden number
Of song, and two suns through my heavens broke,
Then knew I why the blowing and the blue
Struck through me, splendor. Darling, I love you.

IV

A PERFECT day draws to a perfect end:
The heavens are shining and the city lies
Against the sunset like a smiling friend
Listening to talk that is both sweet and wise:
And in an easy revery in the park
The people, clean of toil, sprawl at their ease:
The day dissolves into the comforting dark:
Peace, O ye People, whispers heaven, Peace!

Above old heads the silent skies are sown
With moon and stars: and girls are drawn to boys:
The hour is full of the faint but poignant tone
Of echoes of old loves, old dreams, old joys . . .
Memory in her arms gathers all Life,
And love lays gentle hands on pain and strife.

V

WE die like children, children smothered out,
And wailing at the dread of the unknown,
And trying by every loophole, in the rout
Of panic, to escape: yet we were sown
Like the perishable seed of grass and grain,
And the very secret of our glory lies
In this wild transcience: to be raised and slain
Is Life's way to evolve the growing skies.

Our greatness grew on death: were the Past not dust
It were a yoke to hold us back: so we
For our children must be downward thrust:
"Make way for Life," cries Life: then why not, free,
And like fine gods, accepting Life's intent,
Will, when our time comes, our own descent?

VI

THE wind is blowing dreams to me. It eddies
Through pools of green, with shadows flying
and sun:
Now for a moment the great oak-bough steadies,
Then rocks in the gale, and rustling laughters run
Along leaping leaves: I hear the varying blowing
Of whistles, great cries torn away and thinned:
Life comes in gusts, and with its wild heart glowing
The city is like a runaway in the wind.

Dreams! We are at the prow of the plunging ship,
Swerving through blue seas, and we lean to the
foam,
We roll to the rolling leagues, we mount and dip,
Sun-winds swing us, and the sea is home,
Home of the wanderers, home of the untamed
rovers,
Home, under star and sun, of runaway lovers.

VII

BOLD must we be and unafraid of delight;
Sorrow's slaves are ever slow to rebel:
What, do we love our chains and the grim night?
What are we afraid of, who can tell?
Is it the Dark One coming to destroy
Laughter and love with death, with doubt, with pain?
But I tell you that the heart of love is joy
And by Joy's lightnings death himself is slain . . .

Creation struggled long millenniums
To wake into laughter: but the great tide moves
Ever toward Joy: and Laughter's empire comes
Through Man's great daring and his godlike loves:
O let us send our spirits through new deeps
With all that shines and sings and laughs and leaps.

VIII

WE take the wings of morning over the mountains
And call the darkened valleys up from fear:
Why, cry our trumpets, are ye stopped, ye fountains?
Why, O ye millions, are ye stooped and drear?
Lift up your gates, and let your gates be lifted,
And draw the everlasting doors apart . . .
For look, the scenery of life is shifted:
He sings with joy who has a warrior heart . . .

Risk all for love: depart from ancient sorrow
And follow the sun unto its highest slope:
Plunge with your whole soul into the new morrow,
And make your wings strong Joy and splendid Hope:
By such a flight against impossible odds,
Though ye be slain, yet ye shall go as gods.

IX

I SING the new word Joy unto the people:
I would I were a herald like the sun,
A bell-ringer in the world's high steeple
To fling and ring this message to every one:
Better to die than live a life that 's sullen,
What is your heart's flame for, save to be spent?
Go study the grass, the wild-rose and the mullein;
Are they, creation's children, with pain bent?

There 's love for all, there 's joy to overflowing,
Morning and earth and the night's heart o'errun
But only the bold young god in his glad going
Shall win from these the might of Earth and sun:
There 's joy in pain for him who is creating,
There 's love in hate when daring hearts are mating.

X

GREEN is the radiant world as if it gloried
In my darling where she walks among the corn:
And though Earth, kissing her feet, with joy is hurried,
It hurries gently that she be safely borne:
Around her dance the girlish summer hours
Adding their loveliness to her fleet grace:
She crowns the fields with beauty and she dowers
Earth and the sky with a new human face.

How from the Earth has she emerged and wanders
As if the planet stole forth, seeking love?
A sense of tears troubles my heart that ponders
Over this marvel: but as I watch her move
She lifts her love-lit eyes to mine, and I
Grow radiant as the Earth, the fields, the sky.

XI

I KNOW how God was born: I know what yearning
Made him divine: man shaped him out of man:
For from his heart flowed love without returning:
All human love was under Earth's dark ban:
And finding neither man nor child nor woman
With understanding and enfolding love:
He wrought of phantasy the Superhuman:
All-Wise, All-Loving: not beneath—above!

I know the ecstasy, the adoration
That rolled in hymns, and moved in mighty prayer:
I know the joy of union with Creation:
I know the bliss devout believers bear:
All that man longs for I have found in thee:
Art thou not life? And what else may God be?

XII

NOW golden October, crowned with the grape, is singing,
While the javelin winds against the woods are hurled,
Glorious from the blue the sun is flinging
His rain-rinsed brilliance on the vivid world:
And the wine-mad month in red and gold regalia,
Scattering leaves, sowing valley and hill,
Goes out dancing to death in a Bacchanalia,
Laughing, singing, for she dies with a will.

Fully lived has the year, so she dies in laughter:
For all that spends itself, is ready for death . . .
O my beloved, let us *live* hereafter,
Pour ourselves in each other, spend our breath,
Love in the uttermost loving, so that when quaffing
Death's black liquor, we toast one another, laughing.

WHAT SINGS THE EARTH?

WHAT sings the Earth to the Sun?
Lover, sings she,
Thou art that glorious one
Who lifteth radiantly
My life unto the light:
Yea, so I overrun:
Such love is infinite,
Beloved Sun . . .

What sings the flower to the bee?
Lover, she sings,
The kiss thou givest me
Giveth me also wings,
That I, by scattering wild,
Gain immortality:
Such love begets the child,
Beloved bee . . .

What singeth woman and man?
  Love, love, sing they,
A sun art thou to span
  And pierce my waiting clay:
And wings that fly past death:
  And more: for through thee moved
Am I, as breath through breath,
  O my beloved!

SUN-DOWN

GOLDEN-WINGED, the sun
With trailing clouds, sinks under . . .
The windy heavens run
As seeking western cover:
And in the garden wander
The loved one and the lover . . .
Darling, day is done:
Golden-winged, the sun
With trailing clouds, sinks under.

RISE, FOR THE DAY

RISE, for the day
With splendor lights the mountains,
The stars in hoods of gray
Have stolen away like nuns
Before the sun's bright fountains . . .
Behold, a city lies
Triumphant in sunrise,
Behold, the gold
Spilled on her peaks of granite . . .
Creation's song is rolled,
Creation's song is rolled
Around the glowing planet.

Rise, for the morn
With glory wakes the valley,
On golden grandeur borne
The lifted corn, the pine
To the loud sunshine rally . . .
Up! the shouting gale
Gives the world all-hail,
Up, up! the cup

Of joy is overflowing . . .
Earth, sky are one dew-drop,
Earth, sky are one dew-drop
In glad abysses blowing . . .

Rise, and put on
A joy your soul adorning,
You darling of the dawn!
The night is gone, and blows
The radiant rose of morning . . .
Come, for the world
Is only half-unfurled,
Come, come! the hum
Of longing Earth is movèd,
For heaven's lips are dumb,
For heaven's lips are dumb
Till they sing you, belovèd!

TRYST WITH THE SEA

THE legless beggar-man sat in his chair,
  There where the gray sand runs to the sea;
I stopped for a word in the wintry air,
  And he pointed a young girl out to me . . .

Her eyes were a dull blue, wistful and wan,
  Her light hair curved round her oval cheeks . . .
In a deep trouble she wandered on
  As one who knows not the thing she seeks . . .

Out of the cramped and the crowded rooms,
  Out of the careless streets she came,
Out of lost love or the noise of looms,
  Trailing a shadow of lonesome shame . . .

Was it a tryst with the sea she kept?
  Soon she was lost where the sands ran out:
So I asked the beggar-man where she crept
  Whom never a soul seemed to care about . . .

And the beggar-man told me girls go down,
When twilight falls, to the rocks of the sea . . .
The slow tide mounts and the young girls drown:
So the gray ocean sets them free.

WAR

1914—AND AFTER

I

I AM caught helpless in the suffering of the world:
Wherever I turn I find the person next to me tortured;
Drop by drop his heart bleeds:
Women weep in the lonely darkness, the bleak men stare at the unrelenting night,
And children cry for healing.

What may the heart-hungry do?
What may the poor do,
And they whose dreams go down in the wastage of the years?

Perhaps I, too, have thrown away my life for nothing:
Hours and years of dream-scourged labor and bitter action erased and lost:
Yet I am a man:
I have my compensations:

But these others?
These without faith, without hope: these that are
children, crying for comfort:
What help for them? what healing?
And now million-numbered worlds go mad and de-
stroy each other:
Lost, lost, are the innumerable . . .
Little I, what am I, that can do nothing?
I am caught helpless in the suffering of the world.

II

I WANDERED over the landscape of Europe:
The cities were clean and proud, and the masses were tame and servile:
The gardens were sweet: there was a quiet comfort in the evening pleasures:
Gigantic were the steel cranes in the harbor where the mammoth shipping lay:
Splendid the pipes of the congregated mills poured their black vapors over the towns . . .

Peace! This was Peace!
But Europe was merely a pleasant landscape over Hell:
And Civilization seemed as a woman grown calm and mellow:
As if she had forgotten,
Forgotten Earth which functions not alone through the ripening fruit and the tranquillity of the grass and the contemplative mind,
But also through storm, flood, fire and volcano.

Woe to the nation that looks for peace in quietness:
Policed peace is impending war:
Well-ordered cities, and beautiful gardens, and smooth manners avail not:
Starved hearts, starved freedoms avail not:
Slavery in the mills and the streets avail not:
Neither is it of avail to compress the individual into the tight mass:
To drill the population in obedience, silence, and drudging toil,
All these make war the alluring adventure, the escape:
Lo, the primitive, starved, roars in the jungle, snaps all chains, and hunts hungrily for blood . . .

Welcome then, War!
Welcome this rebirth of the world, in terror, havoc and desolation:
The woman, Civilization, gives birth to a child . . .
This is the birth-year of the world . . .
Wonderful shall shine the little one . . .

III

1

HANG the hills with black,
And blacken the early violets with the blood of the young:
What want we with a Spring of fragrant farmlands,
Gardens, smokes of the brush,
And healing rains?

Let the birds, the winds and the sea
Sing no more the loves of mating, and the marriage chants of Spring . . .
But mournfully pipe dirges of broadcast tragic death.

2

What want we with the Spring?
We have cast in roaring foundries the dark-bored steel,
And like gods have snatched the chemical might of the Earth,
And devised a killing and a crime . . .

Out of the murder of our hearts, we have wrought
great havoc . . .
Sinking of ships at sea, and the toppling of cities,
And the mowing of living hosts!

What want we with the Spring?

3

Patiently the millions wrought:
With sacrificial hands, and suffering vision,
Chaos became a city, a ship, a school . . .

Steadily the gates of pain were battered,
And the gates of darkness assailed,
And the waste of spirit striven with.

And the young went forth crying: Spring! Spring!
Hope dawns! A glory!
We are shaping a marvel in the skies!
Man becomes god: this is the morning and the first
day of Creation!

4

Spring?
The hosts contend together:
Cities are become dust-heaps:
The young god, the Creator,
Has turned fury and fiend, the Destroyer . . .

Strange sowing of seed goes on:
This is the year when we sow the Earth with the
flesh of young men . . .

5

Black! black! black!
We have blasted away in a day,
Our own children . . .

We have gone mad, killing the young,
Slaying the hope of the world . . .

Now youth leaves his dream and his toil and his
quickening love
To kill or to die . . .
O short-lived generation!
Debauch of blood!
Folly and sin!

6

No more of it!
Take away Spring, and give over the planet to a moon's death, a frozen death:
Our Earth deserves extinction,
With her rotten breed of men . . .

7

So I cried, and in rage and grief went forth through the city,
The New-World City of Peace . . .

8

I passed a prison . . .
Broken men decayed in the damp.

I passed a mill . . .
Children and pale women peered wistfully from the windows . . .

I passed a hospital . . .
Human wreckage sunned there beside the morgue.

I walked through stinking slums . . .
Children nosed in the garbage.

9

Then I went to the home of a friend,
And found darkness . . .
Husband and wife were slowly slaying each other:
Slaying with love.

The woman whispered to me:
"God! could I go to the war! go to the war and be killed!"

10

Then I looked in my own breast . . .
And I said: What war is this I am bitter against?
Behold, the poison of my soul that destroys peace about me,
Behold, the bayonet of my hate, and the fumes of my bestiality:
The contending armies of lusts and shames and intrigues:
The sentries of dark sin . . .

In this little world of Self I saw the big:
In my own breast I found war and disaster and ship-sinking,
The death of faith and of hope . . .

Behold, in myself I found Man:
Who since the beginning has been this advancing
conflict . . .
Ever thus . . .

11

Then is it marvel no peace is on Earth?
Where is the Man of Peace?

Shall I be crushed then by the horror of blood and
carrion?
By wholesale carnage?

12

Dark in a world of darkness, I left the city;
And then I saw,
O ancient and new miracle . . .

Resistless, laughing at death, overruling decay,
Earth silently lifted life . . .

Impassive and calm lay the heaps of the hills,
And steadily rising,
Green pierced through, and the soil steamed, and
the birds nested.

There was the farmer-boy plowing,
And there the young wife airing the house,
And close to the handled mud the absorbed faces of
children . . .
Lo, thought I, Earth holds to her hope . . .

13

Then I greeted the hills . . .
O let them be mantled with green, I said,
And let beauty hang from the boughs . . .
Increase the laughter of children,
String the cities with color and glory,
Lift a music . . .

Once were the heavens a blackness,
Then blazed a sun forth . . .
In the Earth's blackness, O tragic struggler, roll
forth your splendid sun:
Fight darkness with light,
Destruction with creation.

14

Have cities toppled and ships been sunk?
Build! build!

Is youth slain?
Beget new children of flesh and of toil:
Beget a new self of splendor . . .

Have hopes died?
Kindle new ones . . .

Has man fallen?
You, man, arise . . .

IV

WOULD you end war?
Create great Peace . . .

You rave at the war, do you?
Do you know that the war has struck in the face
with a fist
A race of clerks,
And turned them to men?
The flabby boys of London died athletes at
Ypres . . .
The Lords of large estates proved in their deaths
equality . . .

Vast millions have ceased to whimper over the coffee
at breakfast,
And ceased from family cowardice,
And from industrial bondage,
And now the mother gives the son she feared to re-
lease for a night's adventure,
And the man who demanded safety first leads the
charge from the trenches,
And life is so real that men are ready to lose it . . .

For in war they have found Peace:
The Peace with oneself, the being used for a great purpose,
The releasing of the spirit in the heart, and its victorious sweep in the soul,
The assertion of manhood, which means courage, hardness, discipline and adventure.

Such is Peace . . .
But that which we call Peace?
This monstrous machine that weakens millions in factories,
This lust of money for its own sake: to swell one's social stomach larger than one's neighbor's . . .
This poor little personal strife and family pride,
This softness of muscle and cowardice of spirit . . .
Is this Peace?
Is merely keeping alive, Peace?
Better the young die greatly than live weakly . . .

Would you end war?
Create great Peace . . .
The Peace that demands all of a man,
His love, his life, his veriest self;

Plunge him in the smelting fires of a work that becomes his child,
Coerce him to be himself at all hazards: with the toil and the mating that belong to him:
Compel him to serve . . .
Give him a hard Peace: a Peace of discipline and justice . . .
Kindle him with vision, invite him to joy and adventure:
Set him at work, not to create *things*
But to create *men:*
Yea, himself.

Go search your heart, America . . .
Turn from the machine to man,
Build, while there is yet time, a creative Peace . . .
While there is yet time! . . .
For if you reject great Peace,
As surely as vile living brings disease,
So surely shall your selfishness bring war.

OUT!

COME, abashed Self, admit one thing:
You have been indoors too much of late . . .
You should have been out wrestling with the sun,
Or running races with the rolling Earth . . .

Where 's the old smell of you, when, nostrils dilated,
You were drenched with sea-salt and soil-odor?
Where 's the lusty tang of your voice, cleansed by strong winds?
Your sun-burnt cheek?
And the animal magic of your eyes?

Out of the house with you . . .
Into the water! Into the sky!
Over the hills!

DANCING BOYS

TWO boys dancing at bedtime . . .
One of them was mine.

They were naked: of shapeliest grace of body: and lightness of foot . . .
Waving their hands, crooking their knees, they wove in and out,
With improvised pattern, spontaneous design . . .

The yellow hair of one, the black hair of the other, shook free and wild:
Their cheeks glowed: their eyes sparkled: their lips opened in laughter:
Like little savages, like Indian boys naked in the moonlight.

Two boys dancing at bedtime . . .
One of them was mine.

EARTH'S LAUGHTER

THE laughter of the Earth: such are children.

When I come to meet you, I hear your glad shout
from behind the house,
Then you come running, bursting with ecstasy, down
the footpath to greet me . . .
(Ten minutes later, you have forgotten that I am
there!)

When we walk together,
I shrink, in my mind, to your size: yea, shrink
straight into you:
And I see the miracles . . .
Then is the laying of shingles on a roof a world-
event,
And waiting for a locomotive to pass, a crisis in
life . . .
Ice forming in the swamp is a mystery worthy of
study,
And the flight of a bird a wild wonder . . .

The laughter of the Earth: such are children.

THE NEW GOD

I

HE comes in darkness
Bringing the day-star in the glance of his eyes.

O you constellations of the night,
Twelve-charted heavens of the crowds of kings,
O burning stars,
From your eastern depths the young god of the Earth
Rises, and drowns you in his glory,
And ascends our heaven
Our fire-bringer, our delight of life, our god, our sun.

He comes, slayer of night,
And the sea shouts, lifting her white arms to his quick embrace,
Continents of blossoms open and drink his kiss:
Earth's children, the sons of men, waken, and go forth to toil:
The lovers waken, and turn to each other amazed at the laughter on their meeting lips.

So in the midnight watch,
My soul, longing,
My soul, longing as a sky of ineffectual stars long,
Greets my god, my genius,
Where he rises as the day-star in my depths,
Opening the future,
Lifting vision,
And I see what self may be
Beyond, beyond man . . .

So self's night-sky gives the birth to a sun:
The god that I follow.

II

BACK-GAZERS have half-gods:
They kneel to Egyptian Earth with Karnak-thoughts,
Or go ways of Olympian youth . . .
Dragged are their souls to the gods behind man,
And kings of the dead . . .
Peace, they cry for, and burial, and the mother's womb.

I too love old fountains:
I am lulled too by the tidal song of womb-waters:
David haunts me with his singing in the desert,
And old wizards send their spells on my tired heart.

I am nothing loathe to drink Earth, Sun and Stars,
To sniff henna, and taste manna, and sip mead;
I know the riches of catacombs,
And I too feed on the great dead.

But for me this is breakfast before battle,
And I know, by my soul's thirst, I must rise up from sacrificial caves,

I must go from the magic back-world,
To the fore-world, and beyond the world,
Where sweat falls on the waters, and blood manures
the soil,
And greedy flesh fights round me.

But I see beyond the battle,
Past smoke, fumes and fallen soldiers,
Visions that make Greece but a promise,
And Karnak but a hint,
And where the mighty men of old
Are but children to the gods beyond man,
To the self that calls me.

His shining is in the future,
His face gleams and goes in the visions of the night:
But seeing him, I follow:
To him I pray:
He is my god, and my greatest god, and I unfold
toward his divinity.

A Future-God is mine:
He is my child, in whose consummate maturity I
shall stand as his child:
He calls: I follow.

III

I PROTEST against the engines,
And I am at odds with their father, the chemist:
I am against all who see only the machinery of the heavens . . .
Their gods are the gods of the naked savage,
Even sticks and stones . . .

Though an idol be wrought of steel it is still an idol . . .

Splendor is in machinery:
The wheeling of the star-bolted car of the heavens,
And the interplay of muscles in an athlete's arm,
Such make an arena of glory
For the works of man, . . .

But among the engines one goeth with a divine forehead,
He is nimble to slip among the rods, and cunning to cast them:
He *drives:* the floods part and foam before his prow . . .

He has builded a street in space, and hung a city
in the mid-heavens:
His roadside is the Earth, and his lamp the sun:
In this street, on this road, he laughs though the
stars are silent,
He sings, though ocean sleeps . . .

I dwell inside his radiance:
It is a region of visions and a sky of wonder:
From a certain darkness in time timeless I have
opened into this glory:
Here I laugh, sing, and weep:
I am he, and he is I . . .

My god is the living god, even Life . . .
My street is Earth and my tower-light the sun:
Engines are the quickener of my steps,
And with sticks and stones I build.

IV

IN the white slant of day I wander;
Sunlight reveals me as only another man in the fields;
Perhaps he smiles at the fluttering thrush whose store of song is spilled;
And the hills regard him as one more stone in their swallowing spaciousness.

But this man is a walking radiance,
His eye, by magic, envelopes the sun-spiked heavens and the silent hills:
And his spirit's eye reaches beyond the fire-painted sky-blue
And snares the stars with the lasso of a thought . . .
The morning is in him: he walks large with it.

He brings news:
He carries across the field with him the garnered greatnesses of dead millenniums,
Man, beast and Earth are carried:

And he grows among the corn swifter than corn grows,
Flinging beyond the hills, beyond the sun, beyond the future,
Vision of a god . . .

He is that god's seed swelling with that god to be . . .
When that the seed opens out,
And it blossoms and bears fruit,
Watered and warmed by ages new,
This seed shall be that god.

V

YE morning-glories, ring in the gale your bells,
And with dew water the walk's dust for the
burden-bearing ants:
Ye swinging spears of the larkspur, open your wells
of gold
And pay your honey-tax to the hummingbird . . .

O now I see by the opening of blossoms,
And of bills of the hungry fledglings,
And the bright travel of sun-drunk insects,
Morning's business is afoot: Earth is busied with a
million mouths!

Where goes eaten grass and thrush-snapped dragon-
fly?
Creation eats itself, to spawn in swarming sun-
rays . . .
Bull and cricket go to it: life lives on life . . .

But O, ye flame-daubed irises, and ye hosts of gnats,
Like a well of light moving in morning's light,
What is this garmented animal that comes eating
and drinking among you?
What is this upright one, with spade and with
shears?

He is the visible and the invisible,
Behind his mouth and his eyes are other mouth and
eyes . . .
Thirster after visions
He sees the flowers to their roots and the Earth
back through its silent ages:
He parts the sky with his gaze:
He flings a magic on the hills, clothing them with
Upanishad music,
Peopling the valley with dreamed images that van-
ished in Greece millenniums back;
And in the actual morning, out of longing shapes
on the hills
To-morrow's golden grandeur . . .

O ye million hungerers and ye sun-rays
Ye are the many mothers of this invisible god,
This Earth's star and sun that rises singing and toiling among you,
This that is I, in joy, in the garden,
Singing to you, ye morning-glories,
Calling to you, ye swinging spears of the larkspur.

VI

SONG swung the spheres
And their travel was a harmony . . .
The sun with rosy fingers twanged the strings of seven planets . . .
And every seed and animal
Was caught up in the song . . .
And struggle was but the minor key
Tuned to the spheric strains.

Man lifted up,
His feet caught in that music,
But from the cyclic rhythm he broke striving to be a god . . .
So half of him was planetary
And half of him was man . . .
And self 'gainst self made harsh discord
Against the heavenly song . .

Man shall be song
When he lifts beyond the planetary,
When he travels away from the dark Earth with the beast lifted by love,

And all of him is human
In rhythm he has wrought,
And against the song of all Creation
Circles the song of Man.

VII

THERE is a golden cloud of life
Blowing:
Through flesh it blew up the long ages:
Through me it blows:
It is a cloud with wings: it is even Life, the
winged . . .

Like a bright storm that cries "Beyond! Beyond!"
It hurried the hosts of bleeding flesh away from
their slumbers,
It tore them up from backward creeping,
And tears on graves, and clashing wine-cups,
Blowing them out to battle in the creation of a god.

Lo, now the golden cloud is blowing,
Through me it blows:
Though I lie down, it lifts me up:
Though I turn back, its gale sweeps me into to-
morrow:
And when I despair, it floods me with such radiance
I deny the dark, and hurry on.

VIII

WHY do I not sink down with unending despair?
Yesterday I walked the Earth like the shell of a man:
For neither in the world was good nor yet in myself . . .

Only a dark fret of dead days flicked me.

Now morning breaks with rain,
And I am closed like a withering thing in grayness . . .
Why do I not sink down with unending despair?

Is it I that was once a seed and shall soon be dust?
Is not life two silences divided by one brief suffering?
The two ends of a century know me not:
Unborn, then dead, they find me . . .

Yet do I not sink down . . .
For life is a golden wind of wine,
And it blows through me, and drunk with its glory
My heart forgets the dark.

IX

MANY shapes has my god: many shapes and strange . . .
Now he appears in the likeness of a sparrow
Who building her nest in honeysuckle on the house-wall
Hatches three fledglings where a hand could touch her . . .
And how he is a child, my son, with arms about my neck,
And now a landscape green with the flat radiance of evening,
And now a song I put my soul into,
And mostly, he is a certain woman
For the adoration of whom I willingly kneel.

There where I put my love, I put my life,
And whatso I touch with fingers of love
Turns into life,
And whatso I passionately embrace becomes the self I would be,
And where there is love there is God.

SLUMS

IN the dusty glare of a humid morning,
The slow horse-trucks get in each other's way,
The drivers lash and curse,
The rough-paved streets are sticky with flies,
The hucksters shout, the fat dirty women scream in their crabbed bargainings:
Filth shoves against filth, and crying children are yanked by the arm and told to "Shut up!"

One sees too the swindle of housing:
Vast populations are broom-swept into this industrial devastation:
Lying tissues of plaster, brick and wood . . .
And this acreage swarms with neglect . . .

The factories vomit their poisonous smokes in the very faces of the people:
Dirt lies where it fell: the forlorn smoke-blackened trees shrivel and wither:
And at dawn, in the refuse heaps, one sees mangy dogs like jackals nosing for morsels . . .

Yes, humanity in the gross is ugly, dirty and abhorrent:
War almost seems as a necessary cleansing of this abscess:
As if Earth had a carbuncle on her smooth and beautiful flesh.

Among all the animals, man is the dirtiest and cheapest and ugliest:
Even a coyote has bright burning eyes, lithe health and a clean fur:
Even a hog is enamoured of sunshine and has a rock-strong natural huskiness:
What have we done with ourselves, we of the race of Ulysses, David and Roland,
That thus in the mass, we appear such rubbish and refuse?

A WISE WOMAN

SHE putteth victory into the heart:
She giveth to the groping one a radiant laughter
as a lance against despair:
She biddeth the feet of the sorrower dance, that his
soul may exult.

With sudden sunrise she illumines the dark face of
failure:
And with scorn and ridicule stings to vividness the
dead heart:
With defiance she challenges the inert, and with
cleansing blade of truth she removes twilight.

She giveth healing, O woman of gentle hands:
And understanding is the ray of her eye when it looks
on the mourner:
With quick smiles she enfoldeth one, and with sweet
humor she sootheth the ruffled.

She does not lack the whimsical waywardness of a
woman:
It delighteth a man's soul, and he would serve her
willingly:
Nor is she too wise to be teachable, but listens with
attentive spirit.

Because this woman has lived every life that a
woman may live,
And been down through pits of pain and agony and
up on the heights of rejoicing,
She scorns none, and condemns none: her task is
understanding . . .
To her may be told the most terrible secret and the
dingiest sin:
She knoweth ere one has spoken.

Where she dwells: there is quietness and low laugh-
ter:
One may almost forget that she sits in the heart of
the storm,
And is the wielder of a sword in the combats of the
human heart.

Her name is Mother:
To her run the little children and the larger children also:
There they find wisdom and high courage, and the hand of healing:
For she putteth victory into the heart.

UNDER THE BELL

YESTERDAY my body was in the place that glorifies man,
Yesterday my body was in the city . . .
In tumult I walked: and I was as a ball thrown about—
Flesh of me chasing through crowded streets, shot like a bolt by subway train.
Drenched in electric lights of night: deafened with gaudy music and clamorous tongues—
But all was Man, Man, Man . . .

To-day my body is in the place that belittles Man:
My ears are muffled in the silence of the hills:
It is as if my eyes had mowed down skyscrapers and cleaned away the distance:
And at night like a fly under a glass bell,
I crawl, star-stunned.

JOTTINGS

PORTRAIT OF AN INVESTIGATOR OF VICE

HIS nails were perfect:
They were well-trimmed, shining and regular:
But under each was a spot of dark dirt.

In those nails I saw the man.

THE MORTAL

LOVE sings that he is deathless—
Then dies.

TO BE A GOD

TO be a god
First I must be a god-maker:
We are what we create.

FERTILIZER

THE dead fertilize the living:
Any garden will tell you that.

Ah, friend, you and I have a neat job for us ahead.

AND THE GREATEST OF THESE?

UNDERSTANDING—not faith.
Will—not hope.
Service—not charity.

A PICTURE OF CIVILIZATION

UNDER every roof, a storm.

A GLANCE FROM THE STREET

ONE upon whom silence had descended
Lay stiff behind the shaded windows.

When, too, shall I
Lie stiff and strange, unknown even to myself?

THEY OF OLD

THEY of old washed the feet of the traveler,
And thus the stranger changed to a friend.

THE UNRIPENED OLD

YOUTH fears death,
For the blossom longs to be fruit.

But the fruit that is ripened by age
Loves Autumn's west wind
And laughs, falling . . .

Only the unripened old fear to go.

THE WINE-BOWL

DAY'S wine-bowl runs over
And the flood of the spilt wine carries
The sun across its hill-brim.

Every mute color opens its lips and shouts:
Behold, I am scarlet, see, I am blue,
Nay, I am green . . .
Every hushed bird must open its throat:
Every heart-vault must swing back its steel-barred
doors
And fill with the float of the sun-down splendor.

IN THE FURNISHED ROOM HOUSE

FULL moons in the mist of the bough-hung park,
And a wan glimmer on the ceiling of my room . . .

I lie, staring upward . . .
Above the ceiling a woman is moving timidly to and fro . . .
And above the woman, the mist-filled sky,
And above the sky, the stars beyond our troublings . . .

The stars are not farther from me
Than you, so timidly stirring.

IN THE SUBWAY

AT any moment arms may go out to me:
So many friendly eyes meet mine among the millions of the city.

I stood on the subway platform:
The conductor kept the door open an extra moment for two old helpless women:
He and I saw each other, and knew we both knew, and smiled and nodded.

THE BUGLE CALL

SUNRISE strikes with three rays, calling me from
my bed . . .
My westward open shutter flashes, and the dirty cur-
tain fills with gold:
Across the Park the eastern flank of the granite Arch
shines white:
And afar the tip of the topmost tower glints golden
in the sky.

SHINE, LIGHTS O' LONDON

SHINE, lights o' London, far:
And beat, O bells, in the sombre air of midnight:
My love 's not by . . .
She 's far away among the Alpine passes,
Brooding, awake, on me,
And I 'm in my little room in London,
With beating bells,
And the women walking late where the men are passing,
And five point crossings lit with lamps and empty,
And the rushing sound o' London . . .

O bells and lights—
My heart 's heavier, heavier now than ever—
My love 's not by . . .
She 's far away among the midnight mountains,
Pale, parted from me,
And I 'm in my little room in London,
With grinding wheels,
And the poor lying dumb on the embankments,
And the girls stealing bold along the pavements,
And the drowning sound o' London.

SUN-UP

AT sun-up,
When there was silence,
From the sea of sleep I was washed to the shores of day,
And opening eyes,
Unsurprised I found the familiar city about me,
The long-known Earth,
The morning light . . .

Sweetened with slumber,
Light as a careless child, my heart laughing,
I tossed the covers aside,
And bare-footed I strode to the open window,
To bathe my body in the dawn . . .

Morning was fresh:
Wheels turned; birds sang . . .
A smoke went up from chimneys . . .
And suddenly I knew, smelling the spring,
That the Creator was at work . . .

SPRING'S ORCHESTRA

SUDDENLY Spring's orchestra tuned up:
Took out flute, fife, oboe, horn and violin,
And began to scratch and whistle,
Practising on love-songs . . .

There came the darkness before dawn:
Up then went the baton,
A streamer of light reaching the zenith,
And there burst out to greet the rising of the sun,
Creation's music,
Creation's love-music . . .

The stage was drowned in electric blue radiance:
Glisten of wet leaves, flash of plumage,
Curl of blue chimney smoke,
Sun on water . . .

And the drama?
Too old to be other than what humanity longs for . . .

All about a pair of lovers
Walking in the dew
And in the green and gold of morning,
Lost, well lost to the world.

THE DISCORD

ALL goes the triumphant way but Man:
He lends to the landscape a calculating brain,
Figuring his crops,
And a cynic scowl, dreading his fate . . .
In the year's music he only is the scratched discord.

AMONG ENEMIES

HOSTILITY is our home,
And Struggle our native heath . . .
The harvest that nourishes us grows from the black ground of agony,
And is sprinkled with tears . . .
Loneliness is our meat and bitter is our wine with calumny and disgrace . . .

Behold the world we are set in . . .
It is a marvel that we survive among such perils . . .
Between flaming and freezing, and the birth and death of worlds,
And the rolling of the Earth unsupported save by invisible threads to the sun,
Storm, flood and cyclone: and our sensitive flesh
That dies at a needle-prick . . .

A million powers fight about us, we in their mesh:
The war of the heavens and the ceaseless war on Earth:

Germ and landslide: beast and poison: yea, and our
kind:
And enemies in our souls . . .
Our own shadows are struggling with us, our fears
and doubts.

Yet in this wasp-nest of life,
Victoriously the generations follow each other,
And you and I pick our way: warring, aggressive,
battered,
Miracles of survival . . .

THE BOY

A BOY sat there in the gleaming summer:
He was supposed to be studying under the maple tree:
But beyond in the radiance of the blooming fields, he saw the children running,
And the loveliness and dazzle and bee-murmur of summer overwhelmed him.

He could not study: he did not know what he wanted:
He yearned somehow to embrace the sky and the earth:
He yearned for love: some warm sweet girl's face deep in the hay:
He sat there, a prisoner, with shining eyes, and parted lips.

Not knowing what he wanted, he became sullen and shy:
He crossed his mother, and fought with her:
And dulled his desires in a headache . . .

DANGEROUS DAYS

DANGEROUS days,
When the lasso of my leaping life,
Seeking forever for that which it may coil about,
Finds nothing in the future, nothing in the day,
And flings backward to some memory of the past . . .

Round this it winds,
Dragging it forth, a glitter and temptation marvelous to see:
And thus, the peril . . .

Yea, these are dangerous days:
I must go invent new battles for my soul.

GIRL ON THE STREET

YOU are so young, you go so visibly longing:
Your attire the plumage of the love-seeker, your face with the beauty of wistfulness:
What do you seek?

Ah, we all seek:
But whatever it is we seek, that we shall never find . . .

Poor child!
You have yet to learn that joy comes from the by-products . . .
Never from the main attainment.

IN WHAT PLACES APART

YEA, thought I, in what places apart,
The inventor is at work,
The architect draughts his design,
The teacher of children leans to the small-sized needs
and dreams of the young,
The artist shapes symbols of future life,
Intense in laboratories the patient searches continue,
Women carry the unborn.

ADVENTURES IN DARKNESS

I

ACCEPTING THE WORST

READER,
If this happens to be the hour when you are drunk,
Whether with love, success or wine,
Or excess of good health,
Nevertheless, for the sake of the facts, agree to this with me:

Life is essentially bitter:
Nothing turns out as we dreamed and desired:
We know little, but are pulled through one tunnel of emotion after another:
Behind joy is pain, behind love is hate, behind life is death:
All things are taken from us, sooner or later,
And in the end, stripped, we are cast aside.

Your best friend: how much do you trust him?
Your deepest faith: how often do you doubt it?
What have you gained compared with what you desire?
Has that moment never come to you when you cursed the fate that made you a man?

Daily we read of atrocious happenings:
And even when man is not cruel to man, man is cruel to himself . . .
Much of darkness is self-begotten . . .

It is a strange fate that has made us an animal,
And yet at war with the animal in ourselves . . .
"Conquer your beast," has been a commandment in every creed . . .
It is our destiny then to overcome what we are,
And to be something we have never known in Nature . . .
The bees and the lions, the sun manœuvering in heaven—no, neither the chemic nor the quick,
Nothing we know makes this effort.

It is as if Man has to lift himself by his own boot-straps,
Up, a little above the Universe . . . and why?

There is a great pother of scientists, philosophers, divines and poets
Telling us with gravity, why . . .
If they did not all contradict each other, you and I might achieve more faith . . .

We only know this necessity of being other than we are . . .
And as this is a task the incommensurable Universe has evidently not attained,
It is small wonder that we are disappointed in life and ourselves . . .
Small wonder that life is essentially bitter,
That nothing turns out as we dreamed or desired,
And that death, and sometimes birth, seem a wilful wickedness: as a spite, even, working out against us . . .

Are these the facts? are they accepted?
Then, having cleaned the ground of much rubbish, we can take to our hearts this comfort:
To accept the worst, is to become free of the worst.

II

MAN, THE WONDERFUL

MAN is beyond doubt the wonderful:
His, among several hundred million worlds, is
a unique fate.

The tail of the monstrous Universe, with that tiny
nub, the Earth, at the tip of it,
Restlessly slaps back and forth in ellipses about the
sun . . .
And on the tail an immense process of parasitism
Has begotten at last that curio, Man,
Namely you and me . . .

Here we are . . .
Caring little that we are the tip of the tail of a sky-
monster,
A star-bellied dragon,
Caring far more whether a starched collar fits coolly
about the neck,
Or whether we see our names in print,
Or expect to meet a certain woman an hour before
dinner . . .

And yet we cannot quite clear ourselves from the Universe . . .
It haunts us like a fitful and intermittent ghost . . .
There is perpetual background of gross chasmic purposes, primal forces, and monstrous fates . . .
Now and then the event faces us with our situation . . .
As sickness, as birth of a child, as sudden-taking death . . .

Then we are sharply aware of the mystery of flesh:
Of our perishable form, and the blood of self to be spilt,
And the even more strange ego, the "I" so apart from Creation, back-gazing upon it,
And the uniqueness of Man . . .

Did the mountain labor and bring forth a mouse?
That is nothing . . .
Creation—of the size of which the heavens by night give us but the index and the table of contents—
Labored and brought forth Man . . .

We feel back to it, and know it dimly as the Mother . . .
Even so a child in the womb might feel through the cord to the vastness that is enfolding it,
And the woman that is begetting it . . .
But what does the sleeping embryo know of the mother, or of the purpose of its own dark growth in the womb?

Nevertheless we reason about it:
We investigate it, and tabulate the results . . .
We look in vain either through telescope or microscope to find any other creatures that wear neckties or spectacles,
We see nothing in Nature in any way resembling a ship's compass or French pastry,
We search vainly through the Earth for anything comparable to a system of philosophy,
Or a book of dream analysis . . .

We end where we began: by noting how wondrously unique we are,
How curiously different from that which begot us.

III

BE OTHER THAN YOU ARE

IT is we who are this creature, Man:
It is we: there 's the wonder of it!

It is you, it is I myself, who have come to be alive in a body not a bit different from all bodies,
But in a consciousness strangely different from all other consciousness . . .

By their fruits, shall ye know them . . .
What consciousness, other than Man's, has begotten a daily newspaper, a mysterious religion, a pack of playing cards?

Why in all the sameness, is this difference?
How comes it that I use words, woven in rhythms, and you understand the words?
That I sit smoking a cigar, at a four-legged table of painted wood, beside a glass window,
Trying to worry large vague thoughts into sharp concrete shape,

Trying to communicate with you, whom I do not
know, who may dwell on the other side of this
planet,
And never see this until I am dead?
Surely such a play goes on neither in the sun nor in
Arcturus,
Nor among the animals of the Earth . . .

It is as if, Be other than you are, were a command-
ment laid upon us . . .
For to be what we are would be to remain larger-
sized babies . . .
The nakedest animal of the Earth . . .
Whereas we are nothing of the sort: we are human
beings.

IV

SCIENCES, PHILOSOPHIES, RELIGIONS

YOU see, each is but a tiny cup that has scooped
up a bit of the Universe,
Little picture frames, perhaps, laid against the
skies . . .
But the heavens are infinite . . .

Each is true in itself,
And useful for its own purpose . . .
But Life is still vast, uncaught, untamed and im-
measurable . . .
You can go freely on, knowing that having mastered
every Science,
Digested each new theory, taken to yourself every
dogma,
The Unknown is greater than the Known,
And probably the world is quite different from the
conception of the human brain . . .

Only this is sure: Mystery . . .
And embedded in Mystery that greater mystery:
Self.

MARCH NIGHT

I SHOOK off the house like a hooded cape,
And came out, free, into the March-blown street.
The Park was a square basin, deep in red brick walls,
filling with evening.

At a lash of the gale, at a sight of the cloud-tattered
skies,
As a coat discarded,
I shook off civilization
And became wild,
And my naked soul raced the clouds,
And the flavor of the Earth was fresh and primi-
tive . . .

Who then was she that opened like a blossom beside
me in the night,
Grew vivid and vanished?

The darkness of her eyes gleamed with fierce secret
fires:
She came from what desert?

The light in a window sent out a hint of romance:
The laborers returning home were gnomes out of caverns:
And who was she that opened like a blossom beside me in the night,
Grew vivid and vanished?

PEACE

I HAVE chosen: there is peace . . .

Long I wrestled: that was war . . .
Long I struggled between many courses, timid and baffled:
Now I have chosen: peace has come . . .

I may be unwise, I may be wrong:
That I have chosen may lead to the gate of destruction:
All the great work may go down.

But now the fragments of me, each one pushing his own way,
Rush together in binding union,
And in one rhythm,
And to one music
I march, one man:
Here is strength, and here is calmness:
I have chosen: peace has come.

GOLDEN DEATH

GOLDEN DEATH

1

ALAS! that what I hold in my arms shall crumble,
That these lips shall fall into dust,
And these eyes gaze no more!
Where shall I look for my darling and my adored one,
O beautiful beloved,
When no youth remembers her,
And only my heart forgets not?

Only this: that I too, I too shall die . . .

2

Merciless surge of time, who on thy tide has strewed us?
Why are we scattered in scenes of Earth?
To the brief and vivid awakening
The Irresistible forced us,
To love and the bonds of love . . . to love and the loss of love . . .

In thy dark hosts of numberless children, O Earth, she blossomed,
Ah, no less than the least sweet trailing honeysuckle,
And though she was hidden, I found her,
And though she was lost, I came on her . . .

How shall I unhand her to thee, O Death?
O how release her?

3

She showed me a lock of her golden hair saved out of youth,
But she showed me not the golden-haired girl who lived so ardently . . .
Ah, where has that other gone, and where shall this one go?

4

I catch her in embraces,
I hold her close and closer . . .
God! could I take her in my soul and be one with her:
A single dreaming, and a single passion,
And but one dying . . .

5

But the west wind sings of separation and scattering—
Death is abroad, taking the year,
Death is abroad, stealing the hours . . .
The shutters clatter, and the maples sing like the sea . . .
I will go out and give myself to the ruining,
Side by side with the bleak Destroyer . . .

6

Sunbursts through leaves, wild geese,
The grass like hair blown backward,
What can it mean?

Why are you not black, O leaves?
Why do you sing no dirges, O wind in the woods?
But hark, what clarions? what trumpets?
What glimpses of grape-stained faces,
What dancing of dripping feet?
Can it be, my heart, can it be,
That hugged in the arms of unconquered Death
Golden October glories?

She glories: she goes out in shouts of color:
Woodland with woodland take hands
Dancing mad Bacchanals . . .
The plum is squeezed, and the apple is pressed,
The grapes are trampled . . .
Wine! wine! the west wind sings, flinging long garlands of leaves.

And the year that has greatly lived, goes laughing to death . . .
She slays herself with the bright blade of the west wind,
And with glittering arrows of the frost.
She decks herself for the burial, in no funereal black,
But in royal crimson and gold . . .
Her leaves fall with a will . . .
The air is winey and brilliant . . .

O sinks not the sun in splendor,
His down-going the glory of the day?
So sinks the year, with sunset colors, into the evening of winter,
Triumphant in defeat,
Victorious in death . . .

7

I am filled with the will of the Earth,
And the will of the sun . . .
I have found the answer to Time,
I have found the answer to Death . . .

Come with me, Beloved, and put on raiment of joy,
The sun clothe us, and rain be on our lips,
And the blood of the fleet year be in our hearts.

Love overflows the perishing flesh,
Never a secret sorrow is thine, but behold, I am sorrowful,
Never a joy is locked in thy heart, but I suddenly laugh.

We are one: let us live to the full:
Let us go as the year . . .
Let us put forth flower and fruit to the uttermost strength,
Spend, spend inexhaustible love,
Till spent we seek sleep,
And having lived greatly
Go laughing to death.

THE FUTURE

I AROSE swiftly that night, for I heard a knock at my door.
"Who's that?" I asked.
And there answered one on the outside:
"The Future."
"What do you want?" I asked.
"Your life," he said, "your service, your agonies of toiling . . .
I demand all."
"And what is the pay?" I asked.
"Death . . ."
We two were silent: the snow fell in the streets:
The night was still . . .
"And is that all?" I asked.
"Yes, that is all . . ."
"And who shall gain by my travail?"
He did not answer: I started out.

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